

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14

USIA-12 RSR-01 /079 W

----- 071440

P R 301153 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8542

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2594

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: BHUTTO ON CONSTITUTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: RESPONDING TO OPPOSITION BOYCOTT OF
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, BHUTTO IN LENGTHY MARCH 29 SPEECH
ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS PREPARED ACCOMMODATE OPPOSITION
DEMANDS BY MEETING WITH OPPOSITION ASSEMBLY MEMBERS
APRIL 2 FOR " FINAL" DISCUSSIONS ON CONSTITUTION. ALTHOUGH
SPEECH CONTAINED SHARP CRITICISM OF OPPOSITION,
PRESIDENT' S TONE WAS CONCILIATORY AND ARGUMENTATION
PUT FORTH REMARKABLY ARTICULATE AND PERSUASIVE. SPEECH
PUTS BALL FIRMLY IN OPPOSITION COURT AND MAY ALSO
HAVE RESTORED CONFIDENCE IN PRESIDENT' S COMMITMENT TO
DEMOCRATIC PROCESS -- CONFIDENCE WHICH HAS BEEN ERODING
AMONG MIDDLE CLASS AND TRADITIONAL ELITE. END SUMMARY

1. IN TWO- HOUR ADDRESS IN ENGLISH OVER NATIONWIDE RADIO
AND TELEVISION EVENING MARCH 29, PRESIDENT BHUTTO REPLIED
TO UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF) CHALLENGE OVER DRAFT
CONSTITUTION. ALTHOUGH OCCIASIONALLY SHOWING FLASHES OF
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IRRITATION AND EXASPERATION AS HE DESCRIBED OPPOSITION TACTICS, PRESIDENT WAS GENERALLY RESTRAINED, UNUSUALLY ARTICULATE, SOME TIMES ETOQUENT AND , FOR ONCE, NONREPETITIVE AS HE PUT FORTH SOPHISTICATED DEFENSE OF HIS PARTY' S POSITION ON CONSTITUTION, DESCRIBED HIS RELATIONS WITH OPPOSITION, AND OUTLINED HIS ASPIRATIONS FOR PAKISTAN. TENOR AND SUBSTANCE OF PRESENTATION SUGGESTS THAT BHUTTO WAS DIRECTING HIS REMARKS PRINCIPALLY TO MIDDLE CLASS AND TRADITIONAL ELITES, GROUPS MOST INTERESTED IN CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND MOST CONCERNED BY ESCALATING CONFLICT BETWEEN BHUTTO AND OPPOSITION. STRONG AND SKILLFUL DEFENSE OF HIS COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC PROCESS SHOULD TEMPORARILY, AT LEAST, MOLLIFY THOSE WORRIED BY STRIDENCY OF RECENT GOVERNMENT PRONOUNCEMENTS AND BY ITS INCREASING RESORT TO FORCE AND INTIMIDATION. SPEECH LARGELY EXTEMPORANEOUS ALTHOUGH BHUTTO GLANCED AT NOTES FROM TIME TO TIME.

2. FIRST THIRTY MINUTES OF SPEECH WERE DEVOTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO BHUTTO' S PRINCIPAL POLITICAL RIVAL, NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY (NAP). REFERRING TO MARCH 23 CLASH BETWEEN NAP AND PPP SUPPORTERS IN RAWALPINDI, BHUTTO DEPLORED VIOLENCE BUT WENT ON TO CAST MAJOR BLAME ON NAP FOR INCIDENT, FALLING BACK ON UNCONVINCING RATIONALE PROPOUNDED BY PUNJAB GOVERNOR KHAR AND OFFICIAL MEDIA. HE WAS CAREFUL TO AVOID EMPHASIZING PUNJABI- PATHAN ASPECT OF CLASH, HOWEVER (ALTHOUGH HE CHARACTERIZED INCIDENT AS " INVASION" BY NAP) AND BY IMPLICATION HE ACCEPTED SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENT BY NOTING THAT " ALL OF US" HAD PARTICIPATED.

3. BHUTTO THEN WENT ON TO REVIEW HIS DEALINGS WITH NAP

SINCE HIS ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE: LIFTING OF BAN IMPOSED ON PARTY BY YAHYA; APPOINTMENT OF NAP GOVERNORS IN BALUCH- ISTAN AND FRONTIER; OCTOBER 20 UNDERSTANDING WITH NAP AND OTHER PARTIES ON PRINCIPLES OF NEW CONSTITUTION; AND INFORMAL AGREEMENT REACHED IN JANUARY 1973 BETWEEN NAP AND GOVERNMENT. AFTER DETAILING HIS CONCILIATORY GESTURES TOWARDS NAP, HE CHARGED THAT NAP HAD INTERPRETED EACH CONCESSION AS INDICATIVE OF GOVERNMENT WEAKNESS AND HAD VIOLATED ITS AGREEMENTS INCLUDING, MOST RECENTLY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INFORMAL JANUARY AGREEMENT. IN APPARENT CANDOR, HE SAID

WALI KHAN HAD TOLD HIM IN JANUARY THAT BOTH OF THEM ACTUALLY WERE " FEUDALS", THAT THEIR TALK OF DEMOCRACY WAS FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION, AND THAT DIFERENCES BETWEEN THEM COULD BE SETTLED WITH MINOR ADJUSTMENTS IN CONSTITUTION. WALI HAD ADDED THAT TWO- THIRDS MAJORITY QUESTION RE NO- CONFIDENCE MOTIONS WAS UNIMPORTANT AND THAT WHAT NAP REQUIRED WERE SOME " FACE SAVERS." ALTHOUGH FURTHER DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN HELD BETWEEN GOVERNOR BIZENJO AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT RAZA, BHUTTO SAID, NAP LATER TOLD HIM THAT SOME " YOUNG BOYS" FROM SIND AND PUNJAB IN NAP CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD OBJECTED TO COMPROMISE WHICH THEREFORE NAP COULD NOT HONOR. HE FAILED TO UNDERSTAND HOW WALI COULD PERMIT " YOUNG BOYS" TO REVERSE PARTY' S POLICIES.

4. TURNING TO OPPOSITION IN GENERAL, BHUTTO CRITICIZED PAST AND PRESENT POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY DEMONSTRATED BY OPPOSITION LEADERS. HE NOTED THAT JAMAAT- I- SLAMI LEADER TUFAIL HAD ONCE PRAISED " ISLAMIC" CONSTITUTION DRAFTED BY FORMER " CHRISTIAN" LEGAL ADVISOR TO YAHYA EVEN THOUGH TUFAIL HAD NOT SEEN DOCUMENT. HE RIDICULED JAMAAT' S DEMOCRATIC AND RELIGIOUS PRETENSIONS, OBSERVING THAT PARTY OPPOSED PRESENT DRAFT CONSTITUTION EVEN THOUGH IT CONTAINED MORE ISLAMIC PROVISIONS THAN ANY PREVIOUS ONE, AND WOULD COMPARE FAVORABLY IN THIS REGARD WITH THAT OF ANY OTHER MUSLIM MAJORITY STATE. IN ONLY DIRECT APPEAL TO SPECIFIC PRESSURE GROUP, BHUTTO URGED STUDENTS, MAJORITY OF WHOM NOW UNDER JAMAAT INFLUENCE, TO REFLECT ON FACT THAT JAMAAT HAD NOW UNITED ITSELF WITH NAP WHICH WAS CALLED " SECESSIONIST" BY MANY PEOPLE (ALTHOUGH, HE ADDED, NOT BY HIMSELF).

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USIA-12 RSR-01 /079 W

----- 075279

P R 301153 Z MAR 73

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR PARA. NUMBERS

5. HE RECALLED THAT OPPOSITION LEADERS HAD CLAIMED
IN 1971 THAT MUJIBUR RAHMAN HAD RIGHT TO FRAME
CONSTITUTION AS LEADER OF MAJORITY PARTY IN NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY YET WERE NOW DENYING THAT RIGHT TO PEOPLES'
PARTY. THROUGHOUT COMMITTEE AND ASSEMBLY DELIBERA-
TIONS OVER CONSTITUTION, HE CONTINUED, GOVERNMENT
HAD BEEN TOLERANT AND ACCOMODATING TO OPPOSITION
VIEWPOINTS ON VARIETY OF ISSUES DESPITE PPP NUMERICAL
SUPERIORITY. HE HAD EVEN GONE TO EXTENT OF CONSULTING
OPPOSITION PRIVATELY BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER SIMLA
MEETING WITH MRS. GANDHI. MOREOVER, FOR FIRST TIME
IN HISTORY OF PAKISTAN AND SUBCONTINENT, THERE
WAS NO DISPUTE BETWEEN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCES
OVER AUTONOMY. IN ABSENCE ANY CONFLICT OVER FEDERAL
STRUCTURE, PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY, ISLAMIC PROVISIONS,
OR DEMOCRATIC SAFEGUARDS, HE ASKED, WHY SHOULD OPPOSITION
TAKE " PATH OF MADNESS" ON CONSTITUTION? RE OPPOSITION
DEMANDS FOR NEW ELECTION WITH CARETAKER GOVERNMENT
PRIOR TO ELECTIONS, HE SAID THIS WAS PREROGATIVE OF
GOVERNMENT IN POWER AND, MOREOVER, WAS NOT GERMANE TO CONSTITUTIONAL
DEBATE. HE WAS CONFIDENT PPP WOULD WIN ANY ELECTIONS, BUT HE WAS NOT
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PREPARED TO ABDICATE RIGHT TO DETERMINE TIMING. PRESIDENT RIDICULED
UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (WHICH HE SCOFFINGLY LABELED
" UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF ILLEGALITY") AS COMPOSED
OF DEFEATED POLITICIANS SUCH AS NASRULLAH KHAN. HE
WAS EMPHATIC THAT CONSTITUTION WOULD BE FRAMED
REGARDLESS OF UDF OPPOSITION.

6. FINALLY TURNING TO MAIN POINT OF HIS SPEECH,
PRESIDENT THEN ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO
MEET ON APRIL 2 WITH THOSE OPPOSITION MEMBERS OF
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHO HAD SIGNED OCTOBER 20 AGREEMENT
FOR " FINAL" EFFORT TO END CONSTITUTIONAL DEADLOCK.
HE WAS NOT, HOWEVER, PREPARED MEET WITH THOSE UDF
LEADERS WHO WERE NOT ELECTED MEMBERS OF ASSEMBLY,
I. E., PIR OF PAGARO AND NASRULLAH, AND WHO HAD THERE-
FORE NO RESPONSIBILITY RE CONSTITUTION.

7. ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION IN SPEECH BHUTTO NOTED THAT TASK OF OVERCOMING POVERTY AND SOCIAL INJUSTICES WAS HIS PRIORITY OBJECTIVE, AND LAMENTED VARIOUS PRESSURES WHICH WERE DEFLECTING HIM FROM THAT TASK. IN CLOSING, PRESIDENT STRUCK PHILOSOPHICAL NOTE AS HE DEPLORED NATIONAL TENDENCY TO TAKE NEGATIVE ATTITUDE ON IMPORTANT ISSUES SUCH AS CONSTITUTION, RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH. (REMARKS ON BANGLADESH REPORTED SEPTTEL.)

8. COMMENT: IN EFFORT TO END UDF BOYCOTT OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, BHUTTO HAS ACCEDED TO OPPOSITION DEMANDS TO EXTENT OF AGREEING TO ANOTHER MEETING OUTSIDE ASSEMBLY, THEREBY REVERSING EARLIER REFUSAL TO MEET WITH OPPOSITION UNTIL BOYCOTT TERMINATED. PRESIDENT'S TACTIC OF DECLINING TO TREAT WITH THE UDF AS ORGANIZATION BY AGREEING TO TALK ONLY WITH ASSEMBLY MEMBERS ASSOCIATED WITH IT PUTS THIS HASTILY CONCEIVED FRONT IN AWKWARD SPOT. THERE PRESUMABLY WILL BE STRONG PRESSURES FROM MODERATE MEMBERS WITHIN UDF TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO BHUTTO'S INVITATION. REFUSAL TO MEET BHUTTO IN "FINAL EFFORT TO SORT OUT REMAINING CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES, MOREOVER, WILL CAST UDF MEMBERS AS IRRESPONSIBLE EXTREMISTS AND COULD COST THEM MUCH SYMPATHY FROM THOSE OTHERWISE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISTRUSTFUL OF BHUTTO. UDF WILL PROBABLY GIVE ITS RESPONSE FOLLOWING MEETING MARCH 30 IN PESHAWAR.

9. BHUTTO'S LATEST TOUR DE FORCE DEMONSTRATES ANEW NOT ONLY HIS FERENSIC SKILLS BUT ALSO HIS POLITICAL ACUMEN. MANY MIDDLE CLASS CITIZENS WERE ALARMED AT GOVERNMENT STRONG ARM TACTICS DISPLAYED IN MARCH 23 INCIDENT, WHICH TENDED REINFORCE THEIR FEARS OF INCREASING AUTHORITARIAN TENDENCIES IN BHUTTO REGIME. AT SAME TIME, THERE APPEARS BE STRONG SENTIMENT AMONG THIS GROUP TO GET ON WITH PASSAGE OF CONSTITUTION. BHUTTO'S CONCILIATORY TONE', HIS REPEATED REFERENCES TO HIS COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES, HIS DESCRIPTION OF EFFORTS HE HAD MADE TO REACH ACCOMODATION WITH OPPOSITION PARTIES, AS WELL AS HIS FIRM PROMISE TO GIVE COUNTRY VIABLE CONSTITUTION SHOULD BE REASSURING TO MANY. DECON 3/30/74 SOBER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ISLAMA02594
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730344/aaaaiqhc.tel
Line Count: 278
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12-Dec-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <28-Dec-2001 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 980121
Subject: BHUTTO ON CONSTITUTION
TAGS: PINT, PK
To: DACCA
KABUL
KARACHI
LAHORE
NEA
NEW DELHI
SECSTATE WASHDC

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005